

BETTER USE OF RESOURCES BY COOPERATIVES

P A P E R

PREPARED AND PRESENTED

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AS EVERYONE HERE WILL KNOW, COOPERATIVES ARE GROUPS OF PEOPLE DOING THINGS TOGETHER AND ACHIEVING BETTER RESULTS BY THE JOINT USE OF THEIR RESOURCES, - BE THESE RESOURCES FINANCE, EXPERTISE, PRODUCTS OR WHATEVER - AND DERIVING BETTER ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS THAN THEY COULD, BY OPERATING INDIVIDUALLY.

LOGICALLY SUCH COOPERATIVES SHOULD BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESULTS FOR THEIR INDIVIDUAL UNITS BY THE MARSHALLING OF THEIR COMBINED RESOURCES AND OUTSIDE RESOURCES WHICH ARE AVAILABLE TO THEM THAN THEY CAN ACHIEVE WHEN OPERATING AS INDIVIDUAL UNITS IN MANY AREAS OF ACTIVITY.

PEOPLE IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE ARE TODAY LOOKING AT COOPERATIVES AND THEY SEE ON THE ONE SIDE A SYSTEM THAT GIVES THEM A NECESSARY LEVERAGE IN A VARIETY OF IMPORTANT MATTERS BEARING ON THEIR LIVES:

BE THEY FARMERS WANTING TO SAFEGUARD THE FAMILY FARM TO RETAIN THEIR LIFESTYLE AGAINST THE ONSLAUGHT OF HIGH COSTS AND THE ENCROACHING MAJOR - OFTEN INTERNATIONAL - CORPORATE FARM STYLE.

BE THEY SAVERS AND BORROWERS EXPECTING SECURITY OF THEIR SAVINGS AND HELP WITH PURCHASING CONSUMABLES THEY NEED FOR BETTER LIVING AT FAIRER RATES THAN THE PRIVATE PROFIT ORIENTATED HIRE PURCHASE AND FINANCE ORGANISATION WILL PROVIDE.

BE THEY A COMMUNITY WISHING TO CONTROL THEIR OWN HOTEL.

OR PRODUCERS WISHING TO HAVE MORE CONTROL OVER THE MARKETING OF THEIR PRODUCT.

WE ALSO HEAR ABOUT COOPERATIVES AS A STRUCTURE FOR GENERATING SELF-HELP PROGRAMMES AS JOB CREATING SCHEMES BEING ONE WAY TO ASSIST THE RELIEF OF THE CURRENT UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION.

ON THE OTHER SIDE, SOME PEOPLE SEE COOPERATIVES AS INEFFICIENT, RUN-DOWN OPERATIONS WITH THE MEMBERS UNABLE TO DEVELOP AND PRESENT A GOOD BUSINESS IMAGE OR A GOOD COMMUNITY PROJECT INDICATING A HEALTHY LOCAL SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE. SUCH PEOPLE POINT TO SUCH LESS THAN EFFICIENT OPERATIONS AS FAILURES BECAUSE THEY ARE COOPERATIVES. BUT THEY LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT COOPERATIVES ARE PEOPLE AND ARE AS GOOD - OR BAD - AS THE PEOPLE CONTROLLING THEM AND IN MEMBERSHIP OF THEM. THEY ALSO LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE BUSINESS FAILURE RATE IN THE PRIVATE PROFIT SECTOR IS CONSIDERABLY GREATER THAN IN THE COOPERATIVE SECTOR.

IN AUSTRALIA, AND PARTICULARLY IN VICTORIA, WE HAVE MANY EXAMPLES OF HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COOPERATIVES BUT WE DON'T ALWAYS HEAR OF THEM OR RECOGNISE THEM AS COOPERATIVES WHEN WE DO. THIS LACK OF PROMOTION OF THE STRUCTURE, WHICH DISTINGUISHES THEM FROM THEIR COMPETITORS, SUGGESTS A RELUCTANCE TO CAPITALISE ON A UNIQUENESS WHICH SHOULD BE A STRENGTH.

TODAY, I FEEL IT IS TRUE TO SAY, THE PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES OF COOPERATIVES ARE NOT ALWAYS CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD. IT IS OFTEN STATE THE COMPLEXITIES OF PRESENT DAY BUSINESS OPERATIONS LEAVE LITTLE TIME FOR THOUGHT OR ATTENTION TO COOPERATIVE IDEALISM. IT IS SAID THAT THE OBJECTIVE OF TODAY'S BUSINESS IS PROFIT AND, WITHOUT PROFIT, WE WOULD HAVE NO COOPERATIVES IN WHICH TO ADVANCE ANY IDEALS. TO A POINT THIS IS TRUE. COOPERATIVES, LIKE ANY OTHER BUSINESS, MUST BE SOUNDLY OPERATED AND BE PROFITABLE. BUT, IN ADDITION TO THESE ESSENTIAL COMMON OBJECTIVES, COOPERATIVES MUST EMPHASISE THEIR UNIQUENESS AND AIM TO CAPITALISE ON THEIR DIFFERENT STRUCTURE AND WAY OF OPERATION TO OBTAIN THE EDGE ON THEIR COMPETITORS.

I HAVE SAID, SOME PEOPLE CONSIDER THE IMAGE OF COOPERATIVES TO BE TARNISHED AND SOME MEMBERS OF COOPERATIVES MAY CONSIDER THIS IS NOT A GOOD ADVERTISEMENT. IF THIS IS THE REASON FOR THE LACK OF PROMOTION OF THE COOPERATIVE AS SUCH, AND IF WE

ARE STILL CONVINCED OF THE MERITS AND VALUE OF THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND MUTUALITY ASPECT OF THEM, THEN SURELY WE SHOULD BE DOING ALL WE CAN TO IMPROVE THIS IMAGE BY CONCERTED EFFORT IN PROMOTION OF THE SOUNDNESS AND VALUE OF OUR OWN COOPERATIVE BUSINESS. IF WE ARE NOT PROUD OF OUR COOPERATIVE STRUCTURE, THEN BETTER CHANGE THE STRUCTURE AND NOT PRETEND WE ARE SOMETHING WE ARE NOT OR, CONVERSELY, PRETEND NOT TO BE SOMETHING WE ARE.

MANY COOPERATIVES HAVE ACCEPTED THE NEED FOR DIVERSIFICATION AND GROWTH AS A RESULT OF CONTINUED HIGH EFFICIENCY AND AS A RESULT OF REALISING THE CONSTANT NEED TO OBTAIN BENEFITS OF ECONOMIES OF SCALE.

HOWEVER, GROWTH WHICH IS ESSENTIAL, SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO OBSESS COOPERATIVE DIRECTORS AND MANAGEMENT TO THE EXTENT THAT THEIR COOPERATIVE SHOWS LITTLE DIFFERENCE FROM THE OPERATIONS OF THEIR PRIVATE PROFIT-MOTIVATED COMPETITORS. SUCH SINGLE PURPOSE DEVELOPMENT PUTS AT RISK ANY CONCESSIONS WHICH OUR PREDECESSORS MAY HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN OBTAINING FOR COOPERATIVES - INCLUDING LEGISLATION, TAXATION AND COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE.

SO, AS WE BEGIN THE NEXT TO THE LAST DECADE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, WE NEED TO LOOK CLOSELY AT OURSELVES AS COOPERATIVES, WHERE WE ARE GOING AND HOW WE ARE USING THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO US.

I WOULD LIKE TO CONSIDER SOME OF THESE RESOURCES NOW BUT I COMMEND TO YOUR BOARDS A GREATER IN DEPTH STUDY OF YOUR TOTAL RESOURCES AND HOW, AS COOPERATIVES, BETTER USE CAN BE MADE OF THEM.

PEOPLE

I HAVE STATED THAT COOPERATIVES ARE PEOPLE AND PEOPLE ARE A COOPERATIVE'S MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE.. PEOPLE IN COOPERATIVES MAY BE MEMBERS, DIRECTORS, MANAGEMENT, STAFF OR NON-MEMBER PATRONS.

THE COOPERATIVE WITH ITS MEMBER OWNERSHIP HAS AN IMMENSE "PLUS" WHICH MANY

NON-COOPERATIVES ENVY. THE RIGHT THINKING, FARSIGHTED COOPERATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MANAGEMENT TEAM WILL ENSURE A CONTINUOUS AND SMOOTH-FLOWING MEMBER RELATIONS PROGRAMME OPERATES, TO ENABLE MEMBERS TO BE FAMILIAR WITH PROPOSALS FOR GROWTH, AND TO SHARE IN THE RESPONSIBILITY WHICH THE CONTINUOUS PROMOTION OF A GOOD COOPERATIVE IMAGE REQUIRES AS WELL AS TO BUILD A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR EXPANSION. EXPANSION IS BEST FINANCED BY MEMBERS OF THE COOPERATIVE WHO ARE INTERESTED, INVOLVED AND COMMITTED TO THEIR COOPERATIVE SO THEY WILL RESPOND TO REQUESTS FOR INCREASED CAPITAL AS REQUIRED.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO INVOLVE YOUR MEMBERS TO ENSURE THIS COMMITMENT?

HOW MANY MEMBERS ATTEND YOUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING?

DO YOU HAVE PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL ON YOUR COOPERATIVE FOR POTENTIAL MEMBERS?

DO YOU HAVE ANY WELCOMING OR INTRODUCTORY SESSION FOR NEW MEMBERS?

DO YOU ISSUE REGULAR NEWS-SHEETS, SAY, AFTER BOARD MEETINGS?

DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTION BOXES IN WHICH MEMBERS CAN PUT FORWARD THEIR IDEAS?

DO YOU HAVE ONE DIRECTOR OR OTHER PERSON WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS ASPECT OF YOUR COOPERATIVE'S ACTIVITIES?

DO YOU INVOLVE MEMBERS IN SPECIALIST COMMITTEES RELATED TO PROJECTS OF YOUR COOPERATIVE IN BUSINESS OR IN THE COMMUNITY?

WHAT PROPORTION OF YOUR YEAR END SURPLUS OR YOUR EXPENSE BUDGET DO YOU PROVIDE FOR EDUCATION, TRAINING AND MEMBER RELATIONS?

AS MEMBERS

OF A COOPERATIVE WHAT SORT OF CRITERIA DO YOU USE TO SELECT FELLOW MEMBERS FOR NOMINATION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

AS DIRECTORS

HOW DO YOU ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OF YOUR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS BOARD MEMBERS, UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL REPORTS?

HOW DO YOU ASSIST NEW DIRECTORS?

WHAT PROGRAMMES DO YOU HAVE FOR SELF-EDUCATION TO BETTER ^{PERFORM} ~~REFORM~~ YOUR DUTIES?

WHAT PROPORTION OF TIME IS SPENT IN BOARD MEETINGS, DISCUSSING PLANNING POLICIES, FUTURE DIRECTION, REVIEWING PAST PERFORMANCE. PETTY NON-POLICY MATTERS AND LOCAL GOSSIP?

DOES YOUR BOARD CONTROL THE POLICIES OR DOES IT MERELY "RUBBER STAMP" THE PROPOSALS OF A STRONG MANAGEMENT?

DOES THE BOARD MEET REGULARLY: WITH THE CHAIRMAN AND MANAGER MEETING MORE FREQUENTLY?

THE MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS OF PLANNING, ORGANISING, DIRECTING, CO-ORDINATING AND CONTROLLING ARE ALL INTER-RELATED.

AS A MANAGER

DO YOU FOLLOW SOME CORPORATE PLAN AND MANAGE BY OBJECTIVES?

DO YOU HAVE A BUDGETTING SYSTEM?

DO YOU ATTEND INDUSTRY AND COOPERATIVE MEETINGS TO KEEP ABREAST OF DEVELOPMENTS?

HAVE ALL AVENUES OF GROUP PURCHASING OF SUPPLIES OR JOINT USE OF EQUIPMENT BEEN INVESTIGATED?

FOR THE STAFF

DO YOU HAVE PROGRAMMES TO ENSURE EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION FROM ENRICHMENT AND SATISFACTION AS A STAFF MEMBER OF A GOOD COOPERATIVE BUSINESS.

WHAT PROGRAMMES DO YOU HAVE FOR STAFF TRAINING?

WHAT PROGRAMMES DO YOU HAVE FOR COUNTER STAFF, OUTSIDE REPRESENTATIVES, TELEPHONE EXCHANGE OPERATORS TO UNDERSTAND FULLY WHY THEIR COOPERATIVE EMPLOYER IS DIFFERENT AND BETTER THAN THAT OF NON-COOPERATIVE COMPETITORS, SO THEY MAY CONTINUALLY PROMOTE SUCH KNOWLEDGE IN THE INTERESTS OF THE COOPERATIVE.

ARE THE CHANCES FOR PROMOTION ADEQUATE. IF NOT, COULD SOME INTERCHANGE SCHEME WITH SIMILAR COOPERATIVES WITH LONG SERVICE LEAVE AND SUPERANNUATION PORTABILITY BE DEVELOPED?

ARE THE STAFF KEPT FULLY INFORMED OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE COOPERATIVE?

ANOTHER VITAL RESOURCE IS FINANCE

AUSTRALIA IS ONE OF THE FEW SO-CALLED ADVANCED COUNTRIES WHICH DOES NOT HAVE A COOPERATIVE BANK. INSTEAD, OUR COOPERATIVES DEPOSIT THEIR SURPLUS FUNDS, USUALLY WITH THEIR LOCAL TRADING BANK, AT MINIMUM OR NIL INTEREST AND BORROW THEIR FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS FROM THE SAME SOURCE WITH A PAYMENT OF COSTS OF THESE SERVICES LEAVING THE COOPERATIVE SECTOR. IN OTHER WORDS, A VITAL AREA WHERE COOPERATIVE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN NEGLECTED IS IN THIS AREA OF FINANCE. THE CREDIT COOPERATIVES HAVE DEVELOPED A CENTRALISED BANKING SCHEME AS AN EFFECTIVE SAVING TO PARTICIPANTS AND AS A REVENUE EARNING PROJECT FOR THE ASSOCIATION, WHICH INDICATES BETTER COOPERATIVE USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES AMONGST THOSE COOPERATIVES. THE BUILDING SOCIETIES HAVE DEVELOPED A SIMILAR OPERATION. THE RAPID GROWTH OF CREDIT COOPERATIVES THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA IS OPENING UP POSSIBILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SOME SORT OF COOPERATIVE FINANCIAL INSTITUTION IN AUSTRALIA. DISCUSSIONS ARE TAKING PLACE BETWEEN THE

COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA AND THE AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF CREDIT UNION LEAGUES.

ALREADY IN THIS STATE WE HAVE SOME PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF SOME INTERCHANGE OF FINANCIAL NEEDS AND RESOURCES BETWEEN COOPERATIVES. THE POLICY OF THE COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF VICTORIA IS TO DEVELOP AND PROMOTE AND ENSURE UTILISATION OF A COOPERATIVELY ORGANISED PROFESSIONALLY OPERATED CENTRALISED INVESTMENT SCHEME FOR COOPERATIVES IN THE STATE. THIS CAN ONLY SUCCEED WITH THE SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT OF COOPERATIVES.

GOVERNMENT GOODWILL AND LEGISLATIVE PRIVILEGES

COOPERATIVES WERE SET UP - LIKE THOSE REPRESENTED HERE - BECAUSE THE MEMBERS WERE CONVINCED THEY OFFERED A MORE EQUITABLE WAY OF DOING ONE'S BUSINESS. OUR LAW MAKERS ACCEPTED THE DIFFERENCE WHEN LISTENING TO ARGUMENTS ADVANCED BY OUR PREDECESSOR COOPERATIVE LEADERS. CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE - BOTH CORPORATE AND TAX - PRIVILEGES WERE WRITTEN INTO THE LAW IN RECOGNITION OF THE DESIRABLE SOCIAL BENEFITS INHERENT IN COOPERATIVE OPERATIONS. THESE PRIVILEGES WERE NOT OBTAINED WITHOUT OPPOSITION NOR ARE THEY UNCHALLENGED TODAY MERELY BECAUSE THEY ARE LAW AND HAVE THE DECLARED SUPPORT OF OUR PRESENT POLITICAL LEADERS. SO, UNLESS COOPERATIVES IN THEIR OPERATIONS AND DEALING WITH THEIR MEMBERS CAN BE SEEN TO BE DIFFERENT TODAY, AS WHEN THEIR PRIVILEGES WERE GRANTED BY STATE AND FEDERAL PARLIAMENTS, THEN THEY WILL BECOME INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM OTHER PRIVATE PROFIT MOTIVATED BUSINESS AND WILL NO LONGER DESERVE TO BE TREATED DIFFERENTLY FROM THESE OTHER BUSINESSES.

SOME OF THE PRIVILEGES PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED, WHICH COOPERATIVES HAVE LOST IN THE LAST TEN YEARS, INCLUDE SPECIFIC COOPERATIVE REPRESENTATION ON COMMODITY MARKETING BOARDS, A FIVE PER CENT DIFFERENTIAL IN TAXATION RATES ON THE FIRST TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS TAXABLE INCOME. MORE RECENT EVIDENCE OF WHAT I AM REFERRING TO IS IN THE VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT. IN THIS STATE, COOPERATIVES INCORPORATED UNDER THE COOPERATION ACT,

INCLUDING CREDIT SOCIETIES AND ALSO PERMANENT BUILDING SOCIETIES HAVE ENJOYED EXEMPTION FROM STAMP DUTY ON CHEQUES, PROMISSORY NOTES, SHARE TRANSFERS ETC. THE MUTUALITY OF COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISE WAS RECOGNISED BY THIS STATE GOVERNMENT AND THIS INCENTIVE TO THE OPERATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATIVES WAS WRITTEN INTO THE LAW. HOWEVER, TODAY, OUR LEGISLATORS AND THE PRIVATE PROFIT ORIENTATED FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING BANKS, ARE SAYING OUR FINANCIAL COOPERATIVES, BUILDING SOCIETIES AND CREDIT UNIONS HAVE GROWN AWAY FROM THE FUNCTION FOR WHICH THEY WERE SET UP AND ARE NOW JUST ANOTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTION WITH PRIVILEGES TO WHICH THEY ARE NO LONGER ENTITLED. ACCORDINGLY, EXEMPTION FROM STAMP DUTY FOR THESE SO-CALLED COOPERATIVES IS THREATENED.

WE HAVE ON THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BOOKS, THE ASPREY REPORT ON COMMONWEALTH TAXATION WHICH MAKES CERTAIN RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO APPARENT COOPERATIVE TAXATION CONCESSIONS UNDER DIVISION 9 OF THE ACT. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAVE INDICATED THERE IS NO CURRENT INTENTION TO IMPLEMENT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS. HOWEVER, TO CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE RESOURCE OF GOVERNMENT GOODWILL ALL COOPERATIVES SHOULD BE CONTINUOUSLY LOOKING AT THEIR PUBLIC IMAGE OF EFFICIENCY, EQUITY AND MUTUALITY. THE STATE COOPERATION ACT IS TO BE RE-WITTEN AND REQUESTS, PROPOSALS, REQUIREMENTS FROM COOPERATIVES IN THE STATE WOULD BE WELCOME IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THE NEW ACT WILL INCLUDE PROVISIONS WHICH ARE REQUIRED AND WILL EXCLUDE PROVISIONS WHICH ARE CONSIDERED EITHER TOO ONEROUS OR UNNECESSARY. THIS MATTER WILL BE DISCUSSED LATER IN THE MEETING

ANOTHER RESOURCE WHICH SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND IS THAT OF EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM.

AGAIN, AUSTRALIA IS UNLIKE MOST ADVANCED COUNTRIES IN THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE ITS OWN COOPERATIVE EDUCATION INSTITUTION NOR DOES IT HAVE INCLUDED IN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SYLLABUS, ROOM FOR STUDY OF COOPERATION IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS, EITHER SECONDAR OR TERTIARY. THE COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF VICTORIA IS DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THIS SHORTCOMING IN THE TRAINING AREA, COMMENCING WITH DIRECTORS' TRAINING. THESE

PROGRAMMES WILL BE DEVELOPED TO INCLUDE EXECUTIVES, MANAGERIAL AND OTHER TRAINING WHICH COULD ALSO INCLUDE JUNIOR RECRUITS' INDUCTION INTO THE COOPERATIVE BUSINESS, FEMALE STAFF, SECRETARIAL, TELEPHONE PRESENTATION AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT. THESE PROGRAMMES WILL RELY ENTIRELY FOR THE SUPPORT THAT IS REQUIRED TO ENSURE THIS WILL BE AN ONGOING AVAILABLE RESOURCE PROVIDING GROUP STRENGTH TO PROVIDE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR MEMBERS.

TODAY'S STUDENTS ARE TOMORROW'S COOPERATIVE LEADERS. BUT FROM WHERE DO THEY OBTAIN THEIR TECHNICAL COOPERATIVE KNOWLEDGE?

MANY TEACHERS ARE PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN SOME SORT OF COOPERATIVE ACTIVITY - IN CREDIT UNIONS, TRADING OR HOUSING COOPERATIVES OR COMMUNITY COOPERATIVES. HERE IS A RESOURCE WHICH PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR LOCAL COOPERATIVE LEADERS TO USE THIS KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE TO PROMOTE COOPERATIVES IN LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS, I.E., COOPERATIVES OF STUDENTS ORGANISING THEMSELVES TO OPERATE THEIR OWN BUSINESSES TO SERVE THEIR OWN NEEDS IN SUCH AREAS AS, SAY, JUNIOR CREDIT UNIONS, BICYCLE, MOTORCYCLE OR CAR REPAIR SHOPS, SCHOOL CANTEENS, VEGETABLE GROWING, MARKETING SCHOOL FARM OR WHATEVER PROJECT MIGHT BE CONSIDERED BY THE STUDENTS AS WORTHWHILE. SUCH EXERCISES COULD BE CO-ORDINATED WITH CLASSROOM STUDIES IN ECONOMICS OR BUSINESS, COMMERCIAL, BOOKKEEPING AND ADMINISTRATION TO PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH A PRACTICAL INSIGHT INTO THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS AS EMPLOYERS, MANAGEMENT, DIRECTORS, ADMINISTRATORS. IT WOULD ALSO HELP PROVIDE THEM WITH A KNOWLEDGE OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP - VIZ: INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORT ARE ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS OF COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP - BOTH FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS-WISE IF MEMBERS ARE TO RECEIVE ANY BENEFITS FROM SUCH MEMBERSHIP.

SUCH PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN FORMAL COOPERATIVE OPERATIONS WOULD REDUCE THE MISCONCEPTIONS UTTERED BY SOME UNEMPLOYED AND COMMUNITY LEADERS THAT COOPERATIVES ARE SOME SORT OF MAGIC PANACEA FOR CURING THE ILLS OF THE WORLD WITHOUT REALISING THE RESPONSIBILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH FORMATION, MEMBERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT OF ANY COOPERATIVE.

COOPERATIVE SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

THE UMBRELLA ORGANISATION FOR ALL COOPERATIVES IN VICTORIA IS THE COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF VICTORIA. THE UMBRELLA ORGANISATION FOR ALL COOPERATIVES IN AUSTRALIA IS THE COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA, OF WHICH THE COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF VICTORIA IS A MEMBER. THE NATIONAL ORGANISATION IS IN TURN AFFILIATED WITH THE INTERNATIONAL BODY, THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE AND ALSO HAS MANY BILATERAL DIRECT RELATIONSHIPS WITH COOPERATIVES AND COOPERATIVE ORGANISATIONS IN COUNTRIES OVERSEAS.

IN THE PAST, AGAIN DISSIMILAR TO EXPERIENCES IN COUNTRIES OVERSEAS, THE GENERAL PRACTICE OF COOPERATIVES IN AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN TO ASSOCIATE STRONGLY WITH INDUSTRY ORIENTATED BODIES AT THE EXPENSE OF THE COOPERATIVE STRUCTURE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION BODIES TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY EXPERTISE OF THE SPECIFIC INDUSTRY IN WHICH THE COOPERATIVE OPERATES. THE STRUCTURAL OPERATION OF THE COOPERATIVE HAS BEEN NEGLECTED WITH THE RESULT THAT THE IMAGE OF COOPERATION HAS TENDED TO BE OVERSHADOWED. THE RESULT OF THIS LACK OF ASSERTION OF COOPERATIVE STRUCTURE AND ITS BENEFITS TO MEMBERS AND THE COMMUNITY HAS BEEN, AS I HAVE ALREADY STATED, A WEAKENING OF REALISATION BY GOVERNMENTS AND COMMUNITY OF THE STRENGTH AND ROLE OF COOPERATIVES.

THE COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF VICTORIA IS A RESOURCE AVAILABLE TO ALL TYPES OF COOPERATIVES AS AN ADVISORY BODY AND IS A BODY SET UP TO MEDIATE ON ALL TYPES OF COOPERATIVE ISSUES WITH GOVERNMENT, BOTH STATE AND FEDERAL.

PERSUASION OF GOVERNMENTS IS BROUGHT ABOUT BY EXERTION OF POLITICAL POWER IN SUPPORT OF A CASE WHICH HAS LOGIC, MERIT, JUSTICE AND PUBLIC INTEREST ON ITS SIDE. SUBMISSIONS FROM A BODY REPRESENTING ALL SECTIONS OF THE COOPERATIVE SECTOR WILL BE LISTENED TO BY GOVERNMENTS WITH A GREAT DEAL MORE ATTENTION AND MORE LIKELY RESULTANT DESIRED ACTION WILL BE ACHIEVED, THAN WILL THOSE FROM ONE SEGMENT OF THE COOPERATIVE SECTOR.

THE COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF VICTORIA HAS REPRESENTATION ON THE GOVERNMENT'S COOPERATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL. THROUGH ITS MEMBERSHIP OF THE COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA, IT HAS ACCESS TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND MINISTERS. BOTH STATE AND FEDERAL COOPERATIVE FEDERATIONS ARE SET UP TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR VICTORIAN AND AUSTRALIAN COOPERATIVES. THESE SERVICES HAVE TO BE THE ONES NEEDED BY COOPERATIVES AND NOT MERELY THOUGHT BY A COUNCIL TO BE NEEDED. THE MORE VICTORIAN COOPERATIVES RECOGNISE AND USE THIS RESOURCE, THE STRONGER IT WILL BECOME TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICES AND BETTER LEGISLATIVE PROTECTION BUT IT CAN ONLY EXIST AND DEVELOP WITH POSITIVE SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT.

CONCLUSION

I HAVE MENTIONED SOME RESOURCES BUT I REPEAT MY EARLIER INVITATION TO DIRECTORS TO LOOK AT THEIR OWN COOPERATIVE IN DETAIL AND STUDY THEIR TOTAL RESOURCES AND DECIDE WHETHER BETTER USE COULD BE MADE OF THESE RESOURCES BY MORE COOPERATIVE EFFORT BY ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER COOPERATIVES AND THE COOPERATIVE FEDERATION OF VICTORIA.